

21 August 1957

REPERCUSSIONS OF SYRIAN DEVELOPMENTS

- I. Syrian accusations against the United States, coming on the heels of a new, firmer understanding between Syria and the Soviet Union, underline the intensity of Syrian antagonism to Western interests.
 - A. Syrian resentment against the West has its roots in the recollections of French rule and stems more directly from Western support for the creation of Israel from 1947 to 1950.
 - B. The depth of Syrian feeling is shown by the fact that the idea of an alliance with the USSR simply to spite Western countries has long been bandied about.
 - C. The first Soviet diplomatic representatives set up shop in Syria in July 1944.

- [REDACTED]
- D. Ambassador Zeineddin boasts he sought out the Soviet delegation
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at the United Nations in 1952 and obtained Soviet agreement to
veto a UN resolution dealing with Israeli use of the Suez Canal.
This, Zeineddin claims, was the beginning of Soviet-Arab
cooperation.

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II.

- [REDACTED]
- A. An arms deal between Syria and the Soviet Union was consummated
in the fall of 1955. Soviet technicians began to arrive in Syria
early in 1956.
- B. On 6 August 1957 a new understanding, which the Syrians feel
assures them of strong Soviet support, was announced. On 12

August Syria charged the United States with plotting to interfere
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in Syrian affairs.

III. Only the specifics of these charges were new. The Syrians along with the Egyptians have long taken the line that American policy in the Middle East was designed to subvert governments and to establish American control.

A. Moreover, the Syrian accusations were consistent with the trend that as Syrian relations with the Soviet Union become more intimate, relations with Western countries and with Middle Eastern states which have taken a more friendly attitude toward the United States,--Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia--became more strained.

- [REDACTED]
- B. During the Suez affair, the Syrians blew up the IPC oil pipeline, Approved For Release 2005/06/01 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000800100009-9 and they have not yet restored diplomatic relations with Britain or France.
- C. Early this year, the Syrians exploited trials of persons alleged to have been inspired by Iraq to attack Syria as another platform from which to assault Western influence.
- D. Early this year the Syrians awarded the Czechs a contract to build an oil refinery, in the face of an offer by Western interests to build a better refinery. Similarly, the Bulgarians were given an airfield contract, while other Bloc states have increased their economic and cultural activity.

Syria's growing intimacy with the Soviet Union and the growing stock-
pile of Communist arms in Syria has profoundly disturbed Syria's
neighbors and even aroused apprehension among the Egyptians.

- A. The most recent Soviet-Syrian understanding increased this feeling
of uneasiness. Then came the Syrian charges against the United
States.
- B. Extreme nationalists in most Arab states have accepted these
charges as valid because they are only too willing to assign to
the United States the imperialist role once reserved for Britain
and France.
- C. ~~Moderate~~ Moderate elements in the Arab states, including some within Syria
itself, who disbelieve the Syrian charges, ~~argue that Communism's~~
are impressed by
~~has made important gains in the area. They cite the increased~~
and have become are even more hesitant than hitherto to
- 5 -
- attempt to counteract this*

~~power of leftist Syrian military officers and the purge of~~
~~opposition elements in Syria.~~

D. Even the Egyptians hail the new Syrian Chief of Staff Afif Bizri, who was also promoted from Lieutenant Colonel to Major General, an out and out Communist.

[REDACTED]

A. Nasr is no longer the sole intermediary between the Soviet Union and the Arab states.

B. The ~~Communist takeover~~ ^{forced domination of Soviet influence} in Syria ~~destroys~~ ^{compromises} the doctrine of Arab neutrality on which Nasr was pitching his bid for leadership of the Arab world.

al-Sharab

C. Nevertheless, the controlled Egyptian press has joined the hue and cry about an American plot. Nasr has inspired this kind of anti-American propaganda for some months. He is now the prisoner of his own propaganda. Despite his distrust of the new Syrian military leaders, he will find it hard to criticize Syria's current policy or to deplore closer Syrian-Soviet ties.

VI. King Hussain of Jordan sees recent developments in Syria as foreboding further steps in a campaign to overthrow his government.

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VII. The Iraqis are gravely concerned over the Syrian situation especially since they believe the Soviet Union has now gained access to the oil pipeline terminals in Syria.

- 8 -

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IX.

Top Lebanese officials, already alarmed by what they regard as threatening gestures by Syria along the borders, have asked this country for formal assurances that we will act if Lebanon is attacked by Syria.

25X1 A. A more imminent and real danger is that of internal subversion.

X. Inside Syria itself, leftists continue to tighten their grip. The pattern of the new regime remains obscure.

- 10 -

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Approved For Release 2005/06/01 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000800100009-9

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D. Defense Minister Azm, who led the Syrian team on its recent trip to Moscow and Prague, might head a move to oust Quwatli. Azm's ambition is to become president of Syria by any means that will secure him his goal.

E. Purges of conservative and even neutral officers and of senior civil servants are already well underway.

XI. The Israelis may well seek to take advantage of the current confused situation. Their attitude on border disputes with Syria will be as tough, if not tougher than ever [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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B. The Israelis may come to feel that they would have a blessing
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from Western countries if they attacked Syria, even though such
an attack would almost certainly unite Arab sentiment behind
Syria, regardless of its regime.

- 13 -

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